



Federal Caucus News

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Federal agencies give themselves a "B" in fish recovery efforts

PORTLAND, Ore. - For the second year in a row, federal agencies have made substantial progress in implementing the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NOAA Fisheries) 2000 Biological Opinion (BiOp) for the Federal Columbia River Power System. According to the NOAA Fisheries findings for 2002, the agencies were successfully implementing 176 of 199 actions, or 88 percent, of the BiOp requirements.

"This is a strong B," said Lorraine Bodi, a senior policy advisor for fish and wildlife with the Bonneville Power Administration, responding to a "report card" issued by Save Our Wild Salmon (SOS) today. "The SOS report card is more of a fish tale than a factual summary of where we are. We are working hard to ensure a successful ESA report from NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of our 2003 check-in later this year."

"The action agencies believe that their performance for 2003 will be better than last year," said Witt Anderson, chief of the Fish Management Office for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division. "We believe that this year's performance will be closer to 95 percent, which will be reflected in NOAA Fisheries' findings letter scheduled to be released soon."

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The facts speak louder than the SOS report card:

- Returning numbers of adult fish have increased substantially; 2002 saw record returns.
- According to NMFS, in-river survival of Snake River juvenile salmon today is comparable to what it was in the late 1960s when only four of the eight mainstem dams were in place.
- The federal effort to recover listed salmon and steelhead is one of the largest environmental recovery programs in the nation. The effort focuses hundreds of millions of electric ratepayer and taxpayer dollars each year on a performance-based approach aimed at achieving the maximum biological results at the lowest cost. Independent scientific review and Endangered Species Act review by NMFS are built into this recovery program.
- The agencies have begun to protect hundreds of miles of habitat essential to the long-term success of the recovery effort.

The agencies have completed just over two years of an ambitious 10-year effort to reverse a trend of declining salmon and steelhead runs that began over a century ago. The recent record runs have been encouraging. They spell success, not failure.

For more information please refer to the Federal Caucus Web site at www.salmonrecovery.gov.

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